

What is claimed

1. A vacuum cleaner, comprising:  
a housing;  
a nozzle inlet;  
a suction generator carried on said housing; and  
5 a dirt vessel carried on said housing, said dirt vessel including a  
sidewall, a bottom wall, an air inlet and an air outlet;  
a filter shield aligned with said air inlet to deflect an airstream entering  
said dirt vessel through said air inlet; and  
a filter element.
2. The vacuum cleaner of claim 1, wherein said air inlet is in said bottom  
wall of said dirt vessel.
3. The vacuum cleaner of claim 2, wherein an air inlet conduit is provided  
between said air inlet and said filter shield.
4. The vacuum cleaner of claim 3, wherein a gap is provided between an  
open end of said air inlet conduit and said filter shield.
5. The vacuum cleaner of claim 4, wherein said filter shield is carried by  
said filter element.

6. The vacuum cleaner of claim 5, wherein said filter element includes two screens sandwiching a filter material.
7. The vacuum cleaner of claim 5, wherein said air outlet is formed by an open top of said filter vessel.
8. The vacuum cleaner of claim 7, wherein said filter element covers said air outlet.
9. The vacuum cleaner of claim 8, wherein said dirt vessel includes a dirt collection chamber.
10. The vacuum cleaner of claim 9, wherein said dirt collection chamber is substantially cylindrical in shape.
11. The vacuum cleaner of claim 10, wherein said air inlet conduit is received concentrically within said sidewall of said dirt vessel.
12. The vacuum cleaner of claim 11, wherein at least a portion of said dirt collection chamber is annular in shape.
13. The vacuum cleaner of claim 12, further including an exhaust manifold.

14. The vacuum cleaner of claim 13, wherein said exhaust manifold includes a manifold inlet in fluid communication with said air outlet of said dirt vessel and a discharge outlet in communication with said suction generator.
15. The vacuum cleaner of claim 14, wherein said filter element is carried by said exhaust manifold.
16. The vacuum cleaner of claim 15, wherein said exhaust manifold is carried by said housing.
17. The vacuum cleaner of claim 14, wherein said filter element is carried by said dirt vessel.
18. The vacuum cleaner of claim 14, wherein said filter element and said exhaust manifold are carried on said dirt vessel.
19. The vacuum cleaner of claim 18, wherein said exhaust manifold includes a carrying handle.
20. The vacuum cleaner of claim 18, wherein said housing includes a nozzle section including said nozzle inlet and a canister section wherein said nozzle section and said canister section are pivotally connected together.

21. A dirt vessel assembly, comprising:  
a dirt vessel including a sidewall, a bottom wall, an air inlet and an air outlet;  
an exhaust manifold having a manifold inlet in fluid communication  
5 with said air outlet and a discharge outlet;  
a filter element positioned between said air outlet and said manifold inlet; and  
a filter shield aligned with said air inlet to deflect an airstream entering said dirt vessel away from said filter element.
22. A vacuum cleaner, comprising:  
a housing;  
a nozzle inlet;  
a dirt vessel carried on said housing, said dirt vessel including a  
5 sidewall, a bottom wall, an air inlet in said bottom wall and an air outlet; and  
a suction generator carried on said housing below said dirt vessel.